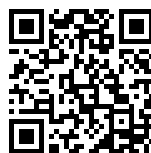

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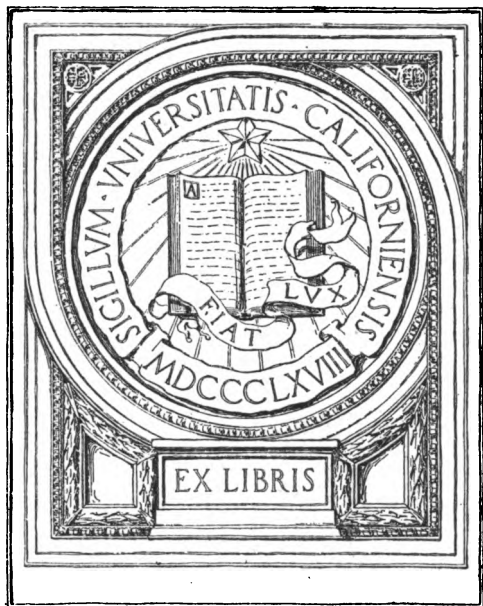
MEDITATIONS SUITABLE
FOR GOOD FRIDAY



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Seven Steps to the Cross

Being Seven Meditations suitable
for Lent, and more particularly
for Good Friday

BY

REV. ERNEST BRADLEY

Rector of S. Paul's, San Rafael, Cal.

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TO
My Sainted Father,

Who, after twenty-five years of service for the Master, prayed that his son might serve in the same cause.

Meditations

I.	THE LAST SUPPER AND THE NEW COMMAND- MENT	1
II.	GETHSEMANE, The Call of the Cross . . .	11
III.	CAIAPHAS, The rejection of Israel . . .	23
IV.	HEROD, The demand for a sign . . .	33
V.	PILATE, A violation of conscience . . .	47
VI.	OUT BY THE JAFFA GATE	59
VII.	GOLGOTHA, The place of a skull . . .	69
	APPENDIX	85

Preface

IN presenting these meditations to my brethren in the ministry and to the laity at large, I do so in the humble hope that God may use them in the future as He has in the past. They were written and given amid the stress and work of a busy city parish, and then were repeated in the quiet suburban parish of S. Paul's, San Rafael, Cal. It pleased God to bless the effort put forth in both instances. In their preparation I acknowledge the usual books one would read to get into the spirit of the times of our Lord, such as Edersheim, Farrar, Geikie, Stalker, etc., but more particularly I beg to say that my endeavor has been to carry a deep spiritual message on the sufferings of our Lord to those who might hear or read them.

ERNEST BRADLEY

San Rafael

TELL ME THE OLD, OLD STORY

Tell me the old, old story
Of unseen things above,
Of Jesus and His glory,
Of Jesus and His love.
Tell me the story simply,
As to a little child,
For I am weak and weary,
And helpless and defiled.
Tell me the old, old story
Of Jesus and His love !

Tell me the story slowly,
That I may take it in—
That wonderful redemption,
God's remedy for sin.
Tell me the story often
For I forget so soon ;
The "early dew" of morning
Has passed away at noon.

Tell me the story softly
With earnest tones and grave ;
Remember I'm the sinner
Whom Jesus died to save.
Tell me the story always,
If you would really be
In any time of trouble
A comforter to me.

—*Miss Hankey.*

THE FIRST STEP

**The Last Supper and the
New Commandment**

A HYMN

Jesu, the very thought of Thee
With sweetness fills the breast ;
But sweeter far Thy face to see,
And in Thy presence rest.

No voice can sing, no heart can frame,
Nor can the memory find,
A sweeter sound than Jesus' Name,
The Saviour of mankind.

O hope of every contrite heart,
O joy of all the meek,
To those who fall, how kind Thou art !
How good to those who seek !

But what to those who find ? Ah, this
Nor tongue nor pen can show ;
The love of Jesus, what it is
None but His loved ones know.

Jesu, our only joy be Thou,
As Thou our prize wilt be ;
In Thee be all our glory now,
And through eternity.

S. Bernard, translated by Rev. E. Caswall.

A PRAYER

Give grace, O Heavenly Father, to all bishops and other ministers, that they may, both by their life and doctrine, set forth Thy true and lively Word, and rightly and duly administer Thy holy sacraments. And to all Thy people give Thy heavenly grace ; that with meek heart and due reverence, they may hear and receive Thy holy Word ; truly serving Thee in holiness and righteousness all the days of their life. Grant this, O Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, our only Mediator and Advocate. Amen.

The Last Supper and the New Commandment

THE first step to the cross may well be called a step of preparation. A preparation not only for the Lord Jesus Himself, but for His immediate disciples, and for those who should be His disciples in the ages to come. It is what is commonly known as the Last Supper. The Lord had gathered His own about Him, as though He would gather strength and courage from human companionship. As the Son of God we know that it was His habit to commune with His Heavenly Father. He is frequently to be found alone, on the hillsides of His beloved Galilee, or in the desert, or high up on the Mount of Transfiguration, living in actual life the injunction He gave His own, regarding prayer. "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy

Father which is in secret." The mountains and deserts and secluded spots were the only places the Lord could call His own. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." Nowhere to lay His head as the Son of Man, but as the Son of God He found a frequent resting and communing place in the presence of His Father. As the Son of Man He seems to have felt the range of loneliness common to all men. He pined for the companionship of His own. Thus we find Him as He nears the end calling His own about Him in an upper room in Jerusalem. They were all there. Twelve of them. Thirteen with the Master, but by and by the son of perdition was to leave them, and so there were to be twelve loving and faithful hearts beating as one.

The supper being ended with its awful yet blessed symbol of the Eucharistic Sacrifice—the bread having been eaten as a symbol of His body, and the wine having

been drunk as a symbol of His blood—the Lord takes a bowl of water and washes the feet of His disciples, to show them that the servant is not greater than his master; to show them that they should love one another; to show them that whoever would be true leaders in the Church of the future, must be *servus servorum*—the servant of the servants.

But even while the Lord is doing this, there seems to be something wrong. Some spirit pervades the assembly that is not in accord with the thought and heart of the Saviour. Around the table of the Last Supper, while the Master is washing the disciples' feet, there is discord. The Master seems to be the only one who can locate it, but it is there, and it cuts Him to the heart. One "that eateth bread with Me hath lifted up his heel against Me." That one was Judas Iscariot. Christ tells them that one shall betray Him, and Judas realizing that the sacred precincts of that room is no place for him, gets up to leave. As he goes out the Lord

looks at him and, with a heavy heart, says: "What thou doest, do quickly." Only two of the disciples, John and Peter, knew what the Lord meant—excepting Judas. He knew and went out into the outer darkness—physical and spiritual, to perpetrate the nefarious deed of betraying the Son of God.

The passing of Judas was a distinct relief to the Lord Jesus. Humanly speaking He might have wondered what course this sullen man with the bag would take, but his going out, though it spelled the doom of the Saviour, was the passing of discord from the first Eucharist of the Christian Church. Christ was now with His own. He felt the relief and said: "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him." Christ had no doubt yearned for the salvation of this man. He had placed in his path the obstacle of eternal love, but it was pushed aside. Now he had gone, there was a sense of relief, even though doom was ahead. The Lord could drink in the

richness of communion with His own, and thereby prepare both Himself and them for the trying ordeal of the next few days.

And what a preparation it was. "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another ; as I have loved you. . . . By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples." He also tells them that He is going away. But "let not your heart be troubled : ye believe in God, believe also in Me." "I am going to My Father's House, and in My Father's House are many mansions." "I go to prepare a place for you . . . that where I am there ye may be also." "Be of good cheer. On this earth tribulation will be your lot, but the new commandment I give you will sustain you." "Love one another as I have loved you." The new commandment seemed to be an echo¹ of the old law. The spirit of the decalogue said : "Thou shalt love the lord thy God with all thy heart . . . and thy

¹ Dr. A. G. Mortimer.

neighbor as thyself." But here we must notice that Christ advances a step further. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Moses indeed placed love under the category of the Law, Christ placed it under the category of Grace. The Law of love was associated with Sinai; the Grace of love was associated with calvary. "Love one another, 'not as you love yourselves,' but as I have loved you." The model that Christ gives to us is not self-love, but His love.

"O Love Divine, that stooped to share
Our sharpest pang, our bitterest tear !
On Thee we cast each earthborn care,
We smile at pain when Thou art near."

The love which Jesus manifested in going to the cross, makes the cross a symbol of life. We all have our crosses, and I know of no better preparation for your cross and mine, than the precept and example the Lord Jesus has given to us. How natural it is when we are in trouble

to seek our own. To gather ourselves, as it were, in the bosom of our families. To pour out our heart's grief to those we love, and to those who understand us. To gather together in God's Church, and get the touch of the Spirit that comes in a beautiful service, or to receive refreshment for the soul in partaking of the Body and the Blood of our Lord. How we are lifted above the sordidness of earth, even to the very bosom of God, even to the fountain head of Christ-love. You have heard the story about S. Augustine.¹ How one evening he was walking by the seashore, overcome with grief and sadness. As the murmuring waves broke at his feet, and the shadows of the declining day seemed to darken his soul, he cried : " Oh ! why is my soul so sad. Tell me ye waves with your ceaseless murmur, why is my soul so sad ? " The answer came : *Quære super nos.*" (Seek above us.) Meanwhile the shadows deepened, the darkness came on, and the firmament was blinking with

¹ Padre Agostino.

stars. S. Augustine lifted up his eyes and said : " Tell me, ye constellations of the heavens, why my soul is so sad ? " And from out of the illimitable spaces of God the answer came as before. "*Quære super nos.*" S. Augustine took yet another flight until he was among the angelic hosts, and there he repeated his question : " Oh ! angels of heaven, do you know why my soul is so sad ? " In harmonious concert their reply came also : "*Quære super nos.*" At last he stood in the presence of God, at the fountain head of Christ-love, and here his grief was turned into joy, and his sadness passed as the mist of the morning. Thus it will be with us all if we seek God and accept the new commandment of our Lord. " A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another . . . as I have loved you."

THE SECOND STEP

Gethsemane—The Call of the Cross

“Arise, let us go hence.”

A HYMN

In the hour of trial,
Jesu, plead for me ;
Lest by base denial
I depart from Thee ;
When Thou see'st me waver,
With a look recall,
Nor for fear or favor
Suffer me to fall.

With forbidden pleasures
Would this vain world charm ;
Or its sordid treasures
Spread to work me harm ;
Bring to my remembrance
Sad Gethsemane,
Or, in darker semblance,
Cross-crowned Calvary.

Should Thy mercy send me
Sorrow, toil, and woe ;
Or should pain attend me
On my path below ;
Grant that I may never
Fail Thy hand to see ;
Grant that I may ever
Cast my care on Thee.

When my last hour cometh,
Fraught with strife and pain,
When my dust returneth
To the dust again ;
On thy truth relying,
Through that mortal strife,
Jesu, take me, dying,
To eternal life.

—*J. Montgomery.*

A PRAYER

Almighty and everlasting God, who, of Thy tender love towards mankind, hast sent Thy Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ, to take upon Him our flesh, and to suffer death upon the cross, that all mankind should follow the example of His great humility ; mercifully grant, that we may both follow the example of His patience, and also be made partakers of His resurrection ; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Gethsemane—The Call of the Cross

“ARISE, let us go hence.” These words, the words of the Master, are the call of the cross *via* the Garden of Gethsemane. There was a note of confidence and triumph in His closing words at the table of the Last Supper. Now all is over, and there possibly comes to His mind the words He had spoken to Judas: “What thou doest, do quickly.” “What thou doest, do quickly,” “for I am impatient. I have met the God of this world and conquered, I have met the tempter and triumphed. Now if it must be, I am ready to be offered up. I am ready to meet the arch foe of mortal life—death and the grave.” “What thou doest, do quickly.” So as we have said, with such thoughts possibly in His mind again, the Lord leaves the table, saying, “Arise, let us go hence.”

From the upper room of the Last Sup-

per, the upper room of the First Communion of the Church, our Lord wends His way through the busy streets of Jerusalem, the festive city, to the gate north of the Temple. During the nights of the Passover season the gates were left open as an accommodation to travelers. Hitherto the evening had found Him journeying to Bethany, the home of Martha and Mary and their brother Lazarus. After the days of teaching in the city, the press of the throng, the clash of public opinion regarding His mission, the Lord seems to have longed for the quiet of that typical home in Israel—the home at Bethany. However, to-night it is different. He longs for home and companionship, but it is not His to have. The day is far spent, the Paschal moon sheds its silver beams over Olivet as if in gracious benediction, and the fitful lights on the towers of the Temple cast a lurid glow over the apostate city. To-night the Saviour turns not to Bethany, but into the dark and forbidding valley of the Ke-

dron "swollen and angry with the winter rains."

Descending into the gloom and shadows caused by the towering walls and fortresses of the city, the Son of Man seeks the seclusion of "an old trysting place," where, not only the twelve disciples, but many others had been wont to meet Him. We are led to believe that eleven of His immediate followers are with Him. The missing disciple is about the nefarious business of selling his Master for thirty pieces of silver. With the faithful eleven, the Lord enters a garden—the garden of Gethsemane—sacred to us all as the place where the Saviour of the world conquered in the supreme crisis of His life.

Taking with Him Peter, James, and John He leaves the rest of the disciples and enters an inner recess of the garden. Here leaving the three He says, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here and watch." It was the most awful death watch in the

annals of the race. The most solemn moments of life are those which we spend in watching our loved ones as they draw near the borderland of the other world. But imagine, if you can, what terror and consternation it would add to our sorrow, if those whom we love were called upon by the State to pay the penalty of a supposed crime. The death watch of such an one would be the most trying that friends and victim could be called upon to suffer. In this awful predicament we find the Son of Man, whose worst crimes were the healing of the sick, the bringing back from death of a dead friend, and His filial attitude towards God. Well might He say to His disciples as He entered the gloomy recess of Gethsemane, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful unto death." Truly it was the most awful death watch in the annals of the race. The most crucial period of His life. One of "God's moments in history." The crisis of the world. Angels waited with bated breath, devils feared and trembled,

only men were indifferent. The shadows deepened apace, the noise of the city was stilled in slumber, even the watching disciples were overcome as the Son of Man made His last stand in the moral conquest of the world.

Over against Him, still further to the north was a hill. Not Olivet, with its glorious vision and peaceful reminiscences, but Golgotha—the place of a skull. He saw on it three crosses, and one was for Himself. As the vision of that cross was stamped upon Him, the sufferings of His soul became intense. When He left His home in Nazareth He had broken with the past. As He emerged from the wilderness of the temptation He was conscious of a supreme victory over the glory of the world. Now He knew that His hour had come. It was the call of the cross for the Son of God. Was there no other way? Might He not offer some other example? Could not the selfishness of human hearts be conquered by some other principle than sacrifice? His

heart was breaking. "He was exceedingly sorrowful," "Sore amazed," "Very heavy." He felt that His life strings were snapping under the awful strain. Whichever way He looked, there was the cross. He sought it not for Himself. He would have chosen another way if it had been possible. But sin had done its awful work. The Lord was surrounded by His enemies. The Saviour of the world was at bay. Every avenue of possible escape was blocked by the vision of Golgotha and its cruel cross.

Falling to the ground He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood, and cried : "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me : nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt." Overwhelmed with loneliness He sought His disciples, and found them asleep. Rousing them, He said, "Could ye not watch with Me one hour?" Again He went and prayed, "O My Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done." Thrice the prayer was

offered, and thrice the Lord sought human consolation. However, human consolation failed. Failed not only through sheer wickedness, as in His enemies, but now through sheer weakness as in His disciples. God alone was left. Yet during the darkest moments not even God, for the Son of Man was called upon to tread the wine-press alone. And alone did He tread and conquer. He became the Captain of our salvation through sufferings, and as the consciousness of victory dawned in His soul, angels came and ministered unto Him. The Lord then turned from the Garden of Gethsemane with its struggle and victory, and with the shadow of the cross upon Him, He called to His disciples, and said : " Rise, let us be going."

We are living in times when the following of the Son of Man is achieved under different circumstances than those just related. Nominally speaking, civilization is Christian. Christian kings grace the thrones of empires ; Christian men

fill the halls of Congresses; and moral motives have some influence in the life of the world. But nominal Christianity and moral motives, though infinitely better than nominal heathenism and stoical pretensions, are not the highest achievements to which the world is called. In the advance of the Christian faith over the face of the earth, the cross has been in the vanguard of progress as the standard of victory, and flushed by our successes we have been in danger of forgetting that the call of the cross is, primarily, a call to sacrifice and consecration. The first processional of the Faith was not the Vexilla Regis of a triumphant Church :

“The royal banners forward go,
The cross shines forth in mystic glow,”

but it was the jeering of a bloodthirsty rabble, crying for the death of the Son of God, who fainted beneath the weight of His cross. “Arise and let us go hence” meant Gethsemane and the betrayal; Caiaphas and denial; Herod and scorn;

Pilate and scourging ; Golgotha and its cross.

If the Church had a deeper consciousness of all this to-day, would it not be better for us? Would it not mean something to be a Christian? Would it not cost something? And because it did mean something, and did cost something, would not Christianity be a deeper and richer thing in our lives? What if it should mean a Gethsemane with its watching, and praying, and sweating of blood, and betrayal? What if it should mean the cutting off of a right hand, or the plucking out of an eye? Is it not better to go through life maimed, than to be maimed in eternity? "Arise and let us go hence!" Let us present ourselves to God as a living sacrifice. He wants us now. Here on this earth. "Arise and let us go hence!" Strengthened by the Bread of Heaven, and the noble decision of noble hearts, let us also turn aside into our Gethsemane, if needs be, and pray awhile. And if it should prove not only

a trysting place of prayer and fellowship, but a struggle of sweat and blood, let us be brave under that also, and know as it was with the Saviour, so it will be with us, when we have conquered, angels will come and minister unto us.

THE THIRD STEP

**Caiaphas
The Rejection of Israel**

A HYMN

Jesus, and shall it ever be,
A mortal man ashamed of Thee ?
Ashamed of Thee, whom angels praise,
Whose glories shine through endless days ?

Ashamed of Jesus ! sooner far
Let night disown each radiant star ;
'Tis midnight with my soul, till He,
Bright Morning Star, bid darkness flee.

Ashamed of Jesus ! oh, as soon
Let morning blush to own the sun !
He shed the beams of light divine
O'er this benighted soul of mine.

Ashamed of Jesus ! that dear friend
On whom my hopes of heaven depend !
No ; when I blush, be this my shame,
That I no more revere His Name.

Ashamed of Jesus ! empty pride !
I'll boast a Saviour crucified ;
And oh, may this my portion be,
My Saviour not ashamed of me.

—*Rev. Joseph Grigg.*

A PRAYER

Almighty God, who art the giver of all good things, grant that we, who have taken upon ourselves the sacred name of Jesus, may be faithful unto death, and at last be received into Thy Eternal Kingdom ; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Caiaphas—The Rejection of Israel

IMMEDIATELY after the events of the last meditation, while the Lord was saying, "Rise, let us be going," Judas, the betrayer, appeared and our Lord was arrested and taken into Jerusalem to the house of Annas, the father-in-law of the High Priest. Annas was probably the most powerful Jew in the city. He had been High Priest himself for several years, and then controlled the succession through his sons. His wealth was fabulous, and on more than one occasion he was supposed to have bought the good will of the Roman authorities. He it was, no doubt, who controlled the nefarious traffic in the courts of the temple, and which on one occasion Jesus had condemned and driven away. Annas was the head of a gigantic trust that fattened itself on widows and orphans, and which made his name a hissing by-

word among the common people. It was meet, therefore, that he should see the young Galilean reformer for himself. Having been satisfied that Jesus was really under arrest, Annas ordered the guards to take their prisoner to the court of Caiaphas the High Priest. The great Jewish Council, the Sanhedrin, had been hastily summoned, and came prepared to act against the prisoner, regardless of whatever testimony might be offered.

Here at last we find the Son of Man, bound and standing in the midst of the semicircle of the court of the Sanhedrin. "It was an axiom of this great body to save life and not destroy it." Any man coming before its court might be assured of fair play. Even an advocate was appointed, whose duty it was to work for acquittal. But no such mercy was meted out to Jesus Christ. Josephus tells us that in the latter days of Jerusalem "fictitious tribunals were set up, when it was desirous to secure the death of an opponent." This was one of them.

Caiaphas had his arch enemy face to face. For three years he had sent out spies and accomplices to trap him, and every attempt seemed to have been thwarted, until Judas betrayed his Master. Now the Nazarene was at his mercy. A form of trial was necessary, but with craft and guile Caiaphas managed things to suit his own ends. Sadducee and Pharisee were united in condemning Jesus as a common enemy. To allow Him to continue healing the sick, and bringing the dead back to life, and proclaiming against their unholy temple traffic was only to hasten their own end, and bring the whole ecclesiastical structure of Judaism tumbling about their ears. At last He was in their grasp, and they would see to it that there was no escape. Witness after witness was produced against Him, but all failed to definitely convict Him. They contradicted themselves and only proclaimed the innocence of the Lord.

So far during the trial Christ had

answered never a word, except to defend His followers by saying there was nothing secret about the movement of which He was the Head. They knew all, for He had taught publicly in the temple. Three years before, immediately after His baptism at the ford of the Jordan, He had come to Jerusalem, and while He did not proclaim Himself, yet His teachings and miracles were of such a nature as to challenge the rulers of the Jews to consider His claims. Those claims had been considered and rejected. With a heavy heart the Son of Man had turned to the north, and in His own beloved Galilee the common people heard Him gladly, and believed Him to be the Messiah.

Now He stood on trial for His life before official Judaism. The Messiah of Israel, for whom the nation had been looking and longing for centuries, stood before them only to be repudiated. The Son of God, who had been promised before the foundations of the world were

laid, was in the midst of them, and they were going to hang Him on a tree. He stood there as a lamb led to the slaughter. He did speak once in defense of His disciples, for which He was brutally struck in the mouth. And so He held His peace.

Finally the terrible farce of justice was getting past all bearing. The mob was restless without, and the day was breaking. Then it was that Caiaphas brought the matter to an end by turning to Jesus and saying: "I adjure Thee by the living God"—"in the name of God I put you on your oath"—"that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ the Son of God?" The answer of Jesus was "I AM."

It was an answer which sent a thrill of excitement throughout the court-room, and no doubt brought the members of the Sanhedrin to their feet. Then followed the official rejection of Israel. Caiaphas appeared to be so moved by what he considered the most outspoken blasphemy, that he tore the priestly robe

of fine linen "as if it were too narrow to let him breathe" under such circumstances. The condemnation of the Lord was complete in the eyes of official Judaism. "He was despised, and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." "And the whole multitude of them arose, and led Him to Pilate."

While this fiasco of justice was going on, another event was taking place in the court yard. Poor Peter had been following afar off. He had offered to fight for his Master in Gethsemane, and indeed did begin to use the sword. Christ had rebuked him, and so Peter fled with the rest of the disciples. But Peter could not stay away from his Master. It seemed as though some fatality led him on to his denial of the Lord. He entered the courtyard of the palace of Caiaphas and was recognized by a woman doorkeeper. Peter denied the recognition. Shortly afterwards, while he was warming himself at a fire—for the night was cold,

and Peter was cold too, cold not only in body, but cold in his heart towards his Master—while thus warming himself, he was again recognized, and again as stoutly denied. Once more he was tested. The trial was nearly over when a man standing near said: “Of a truth this fellow also was with him; for he is a Galilean, his speech betrayeth him.” Peter’s very eloquence had got him into the most serious trouble of his life. Again he denied his Master, and this time with oaths. Then the cock crew, for the morning was beginning to break, and Peter realizing what he had done, looked up towards the Lord, who also turned and looked at Peter. That look broke Peter’s heart. He remembered all. It was hard for Jesus to be rejected of Israel, it was infinitely worse to be rejected by the man who was His close friend, and most ardent disciple. “And Peter went out and wept bitterly.”

THE FOURTH STEP

**Herod
The Demand for a Sign**

A HYMN

O Jesu, Thou art standing
Outside the fast-closed door,
In lowly patience waiting
To pass the threshold o'er :
Shame on us, Christian brothers,
His Name and sign who bear :
Oh, shame, thrice shame upon us,
To keep Him standing there !

O Jesu, Thou art knocking :
And lo ! that hand is scarred,
And thorns Thy brow encircle,
And tears Thy face have marred :
O love that passeth knowledge,
So patiently to wait !
O sin that hath no equal,
So fast to bar the gate !

O Jesu, Thou art pleading
In accents meek and low,
"I died for you, My children,
And will ye treat Me so ?"
O Lord, with shame and sorrow
We open now the door :
Dear Saviour, enter, enter,
And leave us nevermore.

—*Bishop How.*

A PRAYER

O Lord, who for our sake didst fast forty days and forty nights ; give us grace to use such abstinence, that, our flesh being subdued to the Spirit, we may ever obey Thy godly motions in righteousness, and true holiness, to Thy honor and glory, who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.

Herod—The Demand for a Sign

FROM the official rejection of Israel, the Lord Jesus was led to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Jerusalem. The Roman law forbade the Jews, as a conquered people, to pass sentence of death, and so, knowing the liberty of Rome on religious matters, it was necessary for the Sanhedrin to devise some charge upon which the death of the Lord might be assured. It was about seven o'clock in the morning, and Pilate seemed in no mood to gratify the whims of a people he absolutely despised. However, it was his duty to dispense justice. He had heard of Jesus of Nazareth from several different sources. He knew how the priests felt towards Him. He had heard that the common people believed Him to be a great prophet. Worse than all, his wife had had a strange dream, and had

begged him that very morning to have nothing to do with Jesus.

Accordingly when our Lord stood before Pilate, the feeling of the governor alternated between pity and scorn. Pity for the Lord, scorn for the Jews. Turning to the accusers, Pilate asked for a direct charge. This rather baffled them, for they had supposed that since Pilate had permitted a Roman guard to arrest the Lord, His condemnation was only a matter of form. So instead of preferring a direct charge they said, "If He were not a malefactor we should not have delivered Him unto thee." Whereupon Pilate answered, "Take Him yourselves and judge Him according to your law." The Jews answered, "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death." And so Pilate was compelled to proceed.

Entering into the palace the governor called the Lord before him. As he looked upon the prisoner his sarcasm was veiled with pity and well it might be, for at first glance the King of kings looked

anything but kingly at that moment. He was worn out with the watch and blood-sweat of Gethsemane. His wrists were smarting under the thongs which bound them, His clothes were disordered, His hair was disheveled, and His face was bruised and swollen from the cruel blow He had received in the court of Caiaphas. There stood the Son of Man "bruised for our iniquities, with the chastisement of our peace upon Him." Well might Pilate be moved with pity. Turning upon Him, the governor said, "Art Thou the king of the Jews?" "Thou with Thy tattered garments, and disheveled hair, and bruised face, and bound hands," "art Thou the king of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of Me?" Pilate immediately disowned any personal inquiry. He was not a Jew. "Thine own nation, and the chief priests have delivered Thee unto me: what hast Thou done?" Then follows that wonderful and mystic colloquy

about the Kingdom of Truth, which held for a time the heart of Pilate, and caused him to determine upon the Lord's release. The man before him was no criminal. The Jews—these same despised Jews with their "straining at gnats and swallowing camels" had delivered Him up for very envy. He would release Him, and to this intent the governor appears before the people.

No sooner, however, did Pilate mention his intentions, than there arose such a storm of human passion that for a moment he was surprised, and at a loss what to do. "We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that He Himself is Christ a king." "He stirreth up the people teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee unto this place."

Definite charges now came in quick succession, and Pilate turning to Jesus said, "You hear the charges against you, what have you to say?" But He answered never a word. The silence of

Christ was more distracting to the governor than the imprecations of the mob, and made him more than ever determined to defer judgment. The wild clamor of the mob raised a new hope in the mind of Pilate. The man was a Galilean. Herod Antipas the Tetrarch of Galilee was in Jerusalem. He would send Him to Herod, and thereby an old quarrel might be healed, and a distasteful judgment passed on to another.

So Jesus is led away to the palace of Herod. It was the same Herod before whom John the Baptist had stood and fearlessly denounced. The same Herod who at the instigation of his mistress had beheaded John. The same Herod whom Christ had called "the fox." Herod the descendant of the cruel and heartless Asmoneans of slaughtered innocents fame. Herod the adulterer, the murderer, the human fox. He had long wished to interview the Lord. He had heard of His miracles, for was not Galilee resounding with His praises. Now he would see not

only the Man, but he would have Him perform miracles for the amusement of himself and court. He would demand of Him a sign. So the crafty Tetrarch questioned the Lord with many words. But He answered nothing. The Christ was silent. His heart had gone out after Pilate, the Godless Roman, but for this man—the incarnation of hypocrisy, the traducer of national ideals—He had never a word. He stood before Herod in silent submission, and yet withal master of the situation.

The attitude of Christ in regard to this demand for a sign was true to the tenor of His mission. Repeatedly a sign had been demanded of Him, but the Lord never satisfied the idle curiosity of unbelievers. By the very necessity of the case He would not do mighty works amongst those who were opposed to Him. His miracles were never “the creation of the abnormal, but the restoration of the normal. Christ is not recorded in the gospels as giving a man a third eye, or an

additional hand, or as making clay birds fly, or animals talk. He does not overturn the order of the world as a demonstration of His power. But when some abnormal thing is presented to Him under circumstances that excite His sympathy, power goes forth from Him for the meeting of the need."¹ "The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear." The Lord Jesus healed because He was Life. He was the embodiment—the incarnation of life itself—He was begotten, not made. He was the Life of the world, the Life of the universe. To transpose the words of S. John we might say, "In the beginning was the Life, and the Life was with God, and the Life was God." When the poor, little, insignificant lives of His earthly day and generation came into contact with Him—the Life of the universe—and trusted Him, and believed Him, His virtue and strength flowed into their lives.

¹ J. Howard B. Masterman, M. A.

It was as natural for Him to heal the body as the soul, as natural as it was for the noonday sun, His sun, to give warmth to the earth.

In a limited sense we know that this power is ours also, since as sons and daughters of God, the Life of God is ours. Do we not know people, who when they enter the sick room bring a breath of health with them. Do we not know of clergymen, and physicians, and nurses, and friends who as soon as they step over the threshold bring the tonic of health in their very bearing. A neat suit, a smiling face, a cheerful word manifest them as people who believe in life, and who live themselves. So it must have been with our Lord, only in an infinite degree. It could not have been otherwise. He was Master of life, and was soon to show the world that He was Master of death.

But the Lord Jesus never performed miracles to satisfy the vulgar crowd, or the inquisitive demand. How foolish of Herod to ask Him. How little Herod

understood his Galilean subject who stood before him. The Lord had settled the demands of Herod some three years before. As S. Mark tells us, "He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan," and one of the temptations was the demand for a sign. Satan having been baffled in his first effort, comes again, and asks the Lord to test the wonderful power which He had. "Go," said the tempter, "to the pinnacle of the temple, and throw yourself down into the courts below. Then indeed all will acclaim you as the Son of God, as the Messiah of Israel. To make stones into bread is something that would benefit you alone, while to throw yourself from the pinnacle of the temple would be an act thousands would witness. Here is your chance. Here your opportunity. Do you hesitate? Are you afraid? Remember the words of Holy Scripture, 'He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee, and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against

a stone.' To whom can this apply better than to thyself?"

Not so, however, did the Lord test His power. Not so did He satisfy the vulgar demand for a sign. To the tempter, to the people, to Herod the Son of Man had no sign to offer, except, and that was the greatest sign the world ever saw, the greatest tragedy humanity ever witnessed—"except the sign of the prophet Jonas"—the sign of His death and resurrection. Satan saw that sign and trembled, men saw it and fled in terror, Herod saw it, Pilate saw it, and when the sign was given the judgment seat was reversed. "Hereafter ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power." The silence of Jesus as He stood before Herod was ominous. It smote the crafty Tetrarch with fear, and seemed to say, "An adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas." "And when that sign is accomplished ye shall see" "the Lord Jesus

revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

THE FIFTH STEP

**Pilate
A Violation of Conscience**

A HYMN

O sacred Head surrounded
By crown of piercing thorn !
O bleeding Head, so wounded,
Reviled and put to scorn !
Death's pallid hue comes o'er Thee,
The glow of life decays,
Yet angel-hosts adore Thee,
And tremble as they gaze.

I see Thy strength and vigor,
All fading in the strife,
And death with cruel rigor,
Bereaving Thee of life ;
O agony and dying !
O love to sinners free !
Jesu, all grace supplying,
Oh, turn Thy face on me.

In this, Thy bitter Passion,
Good Shepherd, think of me
With Thy most sweet compassion,
Unworthy though I be :
Beneath Thy cross abiding
Forever would I rest,
In Thy dear love confiding,
And with Thy presence blest.

Be near when I am dying ;
Oh, show Thy cross to me :
And to my succor flying,
Come, Lord, and set me free.
These eyes, new faith receiving,
From Jesus shall not move ;
For he, who dies believing,
Dies safely through Thy love.
—*S. Bernard. Tr. by Sir Henry W. Baker.*

A PRAYER

O Lord God, whose Son suffered under Pontius Pilate, grant that we may "not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, but manfully to fight under His banner, against sin, the world, and the devil, and to continue Christ's faithful soldiers and servants until life's end." Amen.

Pilate—A Violation of Conscience

WHEN the Lord Jesus refused to give Herod a sign, He was handed over to the sport of the soldiers. They dragged Him to their quarters, they improvised a throne, they dressed the Saviour in mock robes of royalty, they pierced His already throbbing brow with a crown of thorns, they put a reed in His hand, and then, crowding about Him, they jeered and laughed at Him. It is an awful picture that S. Luke here presents to us. The picture of a king allowing his subject—an innocent person—whom he shrunk from condemning, to be the sport and jest of brutal soldiers. Herod's conduct is beyond the words of human censure. We leave him with the Lord whom he insulted and degraded.

Since Herod would not condemn, it was necessary that Jesus be taken before Pilate again. This much may be said of

the Roman governor, that his conscience seemed to be of a finer quality than that of the Tetrarch of Galilee. It is a pity he did not have the moral stamina to obey it. We rather expect it of Pilate who had been trained in a "school of jurisprudence noted for its official sense of justice." From the very first, when the Lord had stood before him, the governor had found himself face to face with the most serious ethical problem of his whole career. He was called upon to condemn a man whom his instinctive sense of justice said was innocent. The Lord read the difficulty in his face. He searched the soul of Pilate with that gaze which was irresistible. He spoke to him regarding a kingdom of truth. Pilate was attracted. He understood what the Lord meant, though he seemed incapable of responding. Goaded on by a rebellious people, sick at heart, baffled by his convictions Pilate had asked Jesus with "a bitter and half sarcastic sigh," "What is truth?" It has been

said,¹ that the question was beyond a jest, or ridicule, or even information. "Sarcasm there was perhaps, but it was that mournful, bitter sarcasm which hides inward unrest in sneering words; that sad irony, whose very laugh rings of inward wretchedness." So Pilate had sought to release his prisoner, but the people demanded His death. He had then turned to Herod, but the wily Tetrarch refused to pass judgment. It remained for Pilate to act.

The court was assembled in the Prætorium. The governor called before him the Sanhedrin and the people. Thousands thronged the court-yard and gates. The expectant demands of the Sanhedrin, and the hostile murmur of the mob greeted Pilate as soon as he appeared. Nevertheless he parleyed with them for time. The progress of the trial was rehearsed. Hoping to enlist popular sympathy he said: "Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, be-

¹ Frederick W. Robertson.

hold, I having examined Him before you, have found no fault in Him. . . . No, nor yet Herod : for I sent you to him ; and lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto Him." " Ye have a custom that I should release unto you one (prisoner) at the Passover : will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews?"

It was an appeal to the sense of human feeling and justice, that Pilate hoped to find in the quivering mass of men before him. Perhaps he expected to find some Galileans, some followers of Jesus to speak up for Him, and turn the popular clamor in His favor. But the followers of the Lord were scattered, while the leaders of the Jews had all too well organized their minions, and had instructed them what to do. Thus the question of Pilate was no sooner uttered, than a mighty shout went up " Barabbas ! Barabbas ! Not this man, but Barabbas ! "

What a strange irony there was in this cry for Barabbas. They were taking

their choice between a prophet whose mission was peace, and a mover of sedition whose mission was murder. They were choosing between Jesus Christ the Son of God, and Bar-Abbas, which means "Son of the Father." It was a strange name for a man to have who was regarded as a robber and a murderer. Here were the people of the prophets, rejecting a prophet. Here were a people who for hundreds of years had been living on the key-note of expectancy for the Messiah, and when He came, they demanded His life. As a matter of choice the priests and the people accepted Barabbas the robber, rather than Jesus the Saviour.

"Barabbas! Barabbas! not this man, but Barabbas!" Pilate quailed before that shout. The vindictive persistency of the Jews humiliated Pilate before the tribunal of his own soul. He felt that the supreme opportunity of his life to do a right act was slipping from him. He knew as he called for water "and washed his hands before the multitude," as a

token of his innocence that he had failed, miserably, and ignominiously failed. The mere washing of his hands was a childish protest against his own convictions. It was a subterfuge to which men sometimes resort, but which can only end in disaster to all concerned. Pilate soon passes from the scene of action. Passes on to the results of his weakness and cowardice. He is remembered as the man who failed, as the man who in order to hold a temporal position sacrificed an eternal state, as the man who violating his conscience handed Jesus over to be crucified, as the man whose name—PONTIUS PILATE imprints a blot of shame on the records of time.

While Pontius Pilate was violating his conscience in the Prætorium, Judas Iscariot was rushing across the city to the valley of Hinnom. Pilate had bartered his soul for the sordidness of earthly ambitions. Judas had done likewise for thirty pieces of silver. In our first meditation, when Judas :

“ With furtive mien and scowling eye ”

was leaving the table of the Last Supper our Lord had said to him, “ What thou doest, do quickly.” Judas acted upon that advice. He struck immediately with the precision of a viper. He betrayed the trysting-place of his Master—the Master who had done him nothing but good. Then he stood apart, as it were, to see the effect of his treachery. Poor Judas ! He overreached himself. Let us hope he hardly expected events would rush on to such an awful pass as the death of his Master. During the cold, gray morning of the trial, with the glamour of his ill-gotten gains at a minimum, and his hatred chilled by the recollection of what Jesus had been to him, Judas began to realize the depths of his crime. The enormity of his sin burned into his brain. The thirty pieces of silver, “ like thirty serpents, coiled around his soul with the terrible hissing of death.”¹ He rushed before the Sanhe-

¹ Edersheim.

drin, and cried, "I have betrayed the innocent." "What is that to us?" said these putative children of Abraham, as they laughed him to scorn. "See thou to that." Judas did see to it. "What thou doest do quickly." He threw the money at the feet of the chief priest and elders, who bought with it the Potter's field. "What thou doest do quickly." The words of the Saviour haunted him. Everything had been done quickly:

"O God ! if Thou art love
Why didst Thou leave me naked to the tempter?"

Everything had passed along with the rapidity of a kaleidoscope.

"Why didst Thou not command Thy swift lightning
To strike me dead?"¹

Judas had gone mad. From the Sanhedrin he rushed across Jerusalem, out into the valley of Hinnom—the most forbidding and revolting place in all Judea—out into Gehenna. There away from

¹ Longfellow's "Divine Comedy."

haunts of men, away from the pity of his Saviour, he tied his girdle about his neck, fastened it to the limbs of a tree, and pitched himself over the precipice, "and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out." Thus perished Judas Iscariot, while Simon Peter wept bitterly, and Pontius Pilate "willing to content the people . . . delivered Jesus to be crucified."

THE SIXTH STEP
Out by the Jaffa Gate

A HYMN

There is a green hill far away,
Without a city wall,
Where the dear Lord was crucified
Who died to save us all.

We may not know, we cannot tell,
What pains He had to bear,
But we believe it was for us
He hung and suffered there.

He died that we might be forgiven,
He died to make us good,
That we might go at last to heaven,
Saved by His precious blood.

There was no other good enough
To pay the price of sin,
He only could unlock the gate
Of heaven, and let us in.

Oh, dearly, dearly has He loved !
And we must love Him too,
And trust in His redeeming blood,
And try His works to do.

—*Cecil F. Alexander.*

A PRAYER

Almighty God, we beseech Thee graciously to behold this
Thy family, for which our Lord Jesus Christ was contented
to be betrayed, and given up into the hands of wicked men,
and to suffer death upon the cross, who now liveth and
reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world
without end. Amen.

Out by the Jaffa Gate

THE judgment of Pilate satisfied the enemies of Christ. "Willing to content the people" he had "released Barabbas unto them . . . and delivered Jesus to be crucified." A centurion was placed in charge who scourged the Lord and allowed his men to indulge in the antics and brutality of the soldiers of Herod. Finally the centurion marshaled his men, some were to proceed so as to clear a way through the mob, and some were to follow as a means of protection. Then to each prisoner—the Lord and the two malefactors who were to be crucified with Him—were attached four soldiers as a special guard. It was still early in the forenoon when the soldiers stepped into place, and then amidst the excitement and howling of a mob of mercenaries, the march to Golgotha began.

Death was to be by crucifixion, the

Roman mode of punishment,¹ borrowed from the Phenecians, who were responsible for most of the abominations of the ancient world. Sentence of death among the Jews was usually carried out by strangulation or stoning, occasionally by burning or beheading. But the Son of Man was to be crucified. He was dying for the world. He was dying to free not only the Jew from the demoralizing bondage of the letter, but the Gentile from the morning darkness of heathenism, and He must needs die by a world process. So bearing His cross after the usual custom, Jesus of Nazareth—the Saviour of men—is led forth to die.

The procession seems to have passed along the narrow streets of Jerusalem, busy with the preparation of the Passover, and out through the Jaffa gate. As it moved along an official, according to the general custom, proclaimed the name and offense of the prisoners. The weakness of Jesus hindered the progress of the pro-

¹ Edersheim.

cession. The struggle in Gethsemane, the betrayal of one disciple and the denial of another, the blow in the court of Caiaphas, the crown of thorns given in irony by Herod, the scourging of Pilate, the intense mental agony He was suffering, all seemed too much for the mortal frame of the Son of Man, and one hardly wonders that He fainted beneath the weight of His cross.

Coming into the city at that moment, and probably moved to compassion and indignation, was a man named Simon, "him they compelled to bear His cross." A blessed burden it proved to Simon, for we read of him afterwards as being a Christian with his wife and two sons, Rufus and Alexander—the same Rufus and Alexander mentioned by S. Mark. What a joy it must have been in after years, when the Church was beginning to triumph, for Simon to remember that he alone of all the sons of men was chosen to assist the Lord bear His cross.

By the assistance of Simon the proces-

sion moved more in accordance with the impatient desire of the soldiers. But what a contrast we have here in this awful march to Calvary—this exit of death—to the entry of triumph of scarcely a week past. Then the Lord had entered Jerusalem, sitting on the colt of an ass, with the assembled multitudes crowding about Him, stripping the palm trees of their branches, and even throwing down their cloaks that He might have a royal bridle-path of entry. How the hills rang with the joyous cry of the Galileans. “Hosanna! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.” Now all is changed. The Galileans, His Galileans who might have changed the decision of Pilate have been surprised. During the night the Lord had been arrested, and before the sun is well up in the heavens, He had been condemned, and is now on the way to execution. What a contrast, this the exit of death, to that, the entry of song and triumph.

Another incident happened in this

journey to Calvary which we may hardly pass without noticing. There appears to have been a great many women, who, moved by compassion, crowded about the Saviour. It is a significant fact that the women, protected probably by their womanhood, were especially in evidence during these last hours of the Lord upon earth. The men forsook Him and fled, but the women ever mindful of His sympathy and love—perhaps shown in the healing of some child, or some member of the family, or possibly because the spiritual intuition of woman is keener and finer than that of man, whatever it may be, the women, the daughters of Jerusalem—were close at hand in the darkest hour of His mortal life. They crowded about Him on the way to Calvary, suggesting no doubt to the soldiers that His burden be lightened, or hushing the imprecations of some vindictive follower of the Sanhedrin. The Lord is evidently touched by their sympathy, and turning to them, He says, “Daughters of Jerusalem, weep

not for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bare. . . . Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"

These words were the heartfelt thanks of Jesus Christ to the women of Jerusalem, mingled with a terrible prophecy. "Weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves." He had not forgotten the cry which arose when Pilate washing his hands, said, "See ye to it, that I am innocent of the blood of this just person." He had not forgotten the awful response—the response of blood—"His blood be on us, and on our children." That response struck the heart of God. Never was a prayer so terribly answered. Never did a people so fearfully overreach themselves. God answered their prayer by encircling Jerusalem with Roman armies.

He gave over these people to the gratification of their own selfishness and sin. He saw that Ephraim was joined to his idols, and He let him alone.

It is a terrible thing when God leaves a nation alone. From that moment they cross the death line, and go down and down to disintegration and ruin. It was so with Israel. It happened under the prophets. Jeremiah saw it, and prayed God that a remnant might be saved. It happened again shortly after the crucifixion of Christ, and the Jew has been a wanderer ever since. The Lord Jesus saw it all. His prophetic vision swept the future and brought tears to His eyes. His sorrow was indeed great, but the sorrow of Jerusalem should be greater. Weep not for Me, ye daughters of Jerusalem, weep for yourselves." "The greatest joy that can come to you is the joy of motherhood, but the time is coming when 'the curse upon barrenness shall be coveted as a blessing.'" The Lord saw beyond His own sufferings, beyond Cal-

vary. He saw Titus surround Jerusalem with the legions of Rome, He saw the streets running with blood, He saw the hillsides covered with crosses upon which were hung the emaciated forms of His countrymen, He saw frenzied mothers eating their own children, He saw the Holy City, His city, the city that He had wept over go down to its ruin in a holocaust of fire and blood. Therefore He could turn to the sympathizing daughters of Jerusalem, and forgetting His own journey to death, say, "Weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves."

THE SEVENTH STEP

**Golgotha
The Place of a Skull**

A HYMN

When I survey the wondrous cross,
On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the cross of Christ my God :
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to Thy blood.

See ! from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down :
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet ?
Or thorns compose a Saviour's crown ?

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a tribute far too small ;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my life, my soul, my all.

—*Rev. Isaac Watts.*

A PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.
Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in
heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us
our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation ; but deliver us from evil :
for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for-
ever and ever. Amen.

Golgotha—The Place of a Skull

THE mournful march of death, which we spoke of in our last meditation, finally arrived at Golgotha—Calvaria—the skull-shaped hill beyond the Jaffa Gate. The cross was then prepared for the suffering Saviour, and it was probably during this preparation that a¹ guild of the women of Jerusalem interposed, as was their usual custom, by offering Him wine, mingled with a stupefying drug. It was tasted and refused, because the Lord was treading the wine-press alone. He was to endure in His mortal body the full agony of the process of death. He who could lay down His life, or take it up, as He thought fit, chose to lay it down with the full meaning of all it meant imposed upon Him. Then the Lord was laid upon the cross, nailed to it by the hands and feet, and lifted up

¹ Edersheim.

between heaven and earth, a laughing stock for His enemies. It was probably¹ at this moment, when the cross with its suffering victim was planted in the ground, with a "rough shock of indescribable agony," that He uttered what we call the first word: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

Under such circumstances it was hardly to be expected that Jesus would bless His persecutors. Human nature would appear justified if it cursed. The death of Socrates was made as gentle as possible, but the death of Jesus was fraught with all the horrors mortal man could conjecture. In the midst of it all we have a prayer for pardon. An absolution to a rebellious people. An absolution unsought, unasked, and unconfessed.

"Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown."

As the time goes on, we have the second word. In this the Lord is more

¹ Geikie.

specific. He has interceded for the nation, He has absolved His enemies, now He is attracted by the dying thief—a companion in the bitterness of death. The Lord singles this man out as the representation of the worst state to which humanity can fall. Singles him out to be an example of the depth of the Saviour's love, and a Father's forgiveness. Christ asserts in death, as in life, the office and power of One who could forgive sins :

“There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.

“The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day ;
And there may I, though vile as he,
Wash all my sins away.”

Among the disciples of the Lord Jesus, John seemed to be the only one who ventured near the cross. The rest forsook Him and fled. After witnessing the first agony of his Master the “disciple whom

Jesus loved," seems to have gone into the city again, returning with the Blessed Virgin, that she might take a mournful farewell of her dying Son. So we find them standing by the cross. John,¹ the Virgin, her sister Mary, and Mary of Magdala. The Lord saw them. He saw her, the sweetest, the gentlest, and most sacred of women. His heart went out to her as He saw the deep furrows of suffering upon her benign face. The Gospel reads: "When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple standing by, whom He loved, He saith unto His mother, woman, behold thy Son! Then saith He to the disciple, Behold thy mother! and from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home." The sight of His mother—and such a mother—standing in majestic sorrow at the foot of the cross moved the heart of Jesus to deep and filial compassion. And what thoughts must have flashed through her mother-heart, how

¹ Ederasheim.

they must have increased the sorrow of the occasion. There was the Annunciation by the angel, the birthday when shepherds worshiped, and kings brought presents. There was the dedication in the temple and the *Nunc Dimittis* of the aged Simeon. Then there were the heart-ponderings over His developing youth, leading up to implicit faith in His mission. Now the faith of years is being tested. How grandly the mother-love bears it. No wavering! No doubt! God knows! and will vindicate His Son in His own good time.

“ Who’s the man could view unmoved
Christ’s sweet mother, whom He loved,
In such dire extremity?
Who his pitying tears withhold
Christ’s sweet mother to behold
Sharing in His agony? ”

But we must hurry on, for it is past midday. The Saviour has hung on the cross more than three hours. The sun is darkened. Ordinarily it was the brightest hour of the day, the hour of dazzling

brilliancy. But nature veiled her face in the land that dared to crucify the Saviour. It was a darkness that affected not only nature, it seemed to creep into everything and everybody. It was ghostly and ominous. It overshadowed the dying Saviour. It crept into His body, into His mind, into His spirit, it was unbearable. The panic of despair seized men and things. The Son of God looks up, turns to the Father. Alas! it is only to feel the hardest blow of all. The gates of heaven seemed closed against Him. His prayer reverberates to earth again. He is forsaken by men and angels and God. He saved others, Himself He cannot save. He is alone in death. He experiences all the woe, and sorrow, and bitterness and agony and despair of a soul standing on the confines of eternity without hope—a soul lost and wandering from the paradise of God. Can we wonder at the fourth word? Are we surprised that it seemed too much for our Blessed Lord? “My God! My God! why

hast Thou forsaken Me?" "That My enemies should forsake Me I expected; that My countrymen should lose heart in My cause was anticipated; that My disciples should desert Me was forewarned, but why hast Thou forsaken Me?" "My God! My God! why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

"Now the torrents of His passion
Deep and fierce above Him roll;
And the rivers of transgression
Overwhelm His human soul."¹

After the fourth word, an expression of spiritual anguish, Jesus feels His bodily pain again. The pain-swollen, and fever-stricken body made its wants known, and the Lord cries out in the pangs of physical need: "I thirst." If in the first word He manifested the characteristics of God, He now gives us in this fifth word a view of Himself as man—tempted in all points like as we are. He had refused the drug offered to Him as a victim of crucifixion, because it was an unnat-

¹ John Mason Neale.

ural alleviation of pain. But when the natural desire of bodily thirst overcomes Him, He calls for help, and straightway one of the soldiers¹ offers the wine brought for their own refreshment. He accepts the proper and natural alleviation of pain, He asks assistance when it was needed, and thus manifests the qualities of perfect and rounded manhood.

The time speeds on, and the Lord of Life is nearing the end. Again He cries, "It is finished." It is the sixth word. Taken as an unconnected sentence, it would appear as the last gasp of a defeated man. A barely articulate expression that all was over and hope passed. However, when we consider the circumstances we realize that it is not the utterance of defeat, it is a pean of victory. His whole earthly life had been lived in the consciousness of a definite and self-imposed purpose. As a child He grew in favor with God and man. From the time of His baptism He had walked

¹ Edersheim.

among men as the manifestation of God. In and through it all there is a thread—a direction—to a definite goal. That goal is the cross. Hanging upon the cross He was fulfilling the words spoken by the prophet Isaiah: “He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, . . . smitten of God and afflicted. He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, and the chastisement of our peace was upon Him.” But in and through it all He was to “see the travail of His soul and be satisfied.” Ah! here is the meaning of the whole terrible thing. Herein lies the true content of the blessed sixth word “IT IS FINISHED!”

“The strife is o’er; the battle done,
The victory of life is won,
The song of triumph has begun
Alleluia!”

Finally there is the seventh and last word. We have followed the Master through the various steps of His humiliation. We have considered briefly His

last words. Seven Steps and Seven Words. Each step takes Him deeper into the valley of the shadow of death. Each word brings Him nearer to the consummation of His mission. 'Tis a blessed word this last one. The consciousness of the Father's love returns. Returns to give Him strength to grapple with the last enemy of mankind. The Son of God is about to enter the valley of the shadow of death—not as one conquered, but as a conqueror. Though the resurrection is yet to come, victory has been realized on the cross. There is no fearful looking ahead; there is the calm assurance of one who feels about him the Everlasting Arms; there is the seventh and almost whispered last word, breathing confidence and hope, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit, and having said thus, He gave up the ghost."

"And having said thus He gave up the ghost." But we know that this was not all. If it were, then this day would be the blackest and most woeful on the hu-

man calendar. Truly it stands for the crime of the ages, and we do right to humiliate ourselves in penitence and shame. Yet it is not the actual deed of suffering and woe that we should dwell upon this day, but upon that for which the cross was really set up. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up." Well may we call it Good Friday, for to us, who are followers of Christ, it is Emancipation Day. The day, the deed of which made possible our salvation.

As in life the Lord shows us how to live, so in death He shows us how to die. In this last word we have the ring of immortality. In life or in death the Son of God gives no uncertain teaching on the question of the future. Christ offers no apologetics. He knows. In life He said, "Let not your heart be troubled. . . . In My Father's house are many mansions." In death He could say with confidence, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." If we, here and now,

will kneel in loving submission, at the foot of the cross, the spirit of Jesus will steal into our hearts. His strength will be our strength, His love will be our love, and we may hear Him say as we face life, or face death :

“Child of My grief and pain,
Watched by My love,
I came to call thee
To realms above.”

“Weep not for this My grief,
Child of My love,
Strive to be with Me
In heaven above.”

A Prayer

“O Lord God most holy, O Lord most mighty, O holy and most merciful Saviour, deliver us not into the bitter pains of eternal death.

“Thou knowest, Lord, the secrets of our hearts; shut not Thy merciful ears to our prayer; but spare us, Lord most holy, O God most mighty, O holy and merciful Saviour, Thou most worthy Judge eternal, suffer us not, at our last hour, for any pains of death, to fall from Thee.”

Appendix

Appendix

THE following plan of service may be brought within three hours' time :

Hymn : " Forty days and forty nights,"
No. 79.

Creed, versicles and collects.

Scripture : S. John 14.

First Step.

Silence and prayers.

Hymn : " Jesu, the very thought of
Thee," No. 434.

Scripture : S. John 18 : 1-12.

Second Step.

Silence and prayers.

Hymn : " O Jesu, Thou art standing,"
No. 357.

Scripture : S. Luke 22 : 54-71.

Third Step.

Silence and prayers.

Hymn : " Just as I am," No. 606.

Scripture : S. Luke 23 : 1-11.

Fourth Step.

Silence and prayers.

Hymn : " O sacred Head surrounded,"
No. 102.

Scripture : S. John 18 : 33-40 and
19 : 1-16.

Fifth Step.

Silence and prayers.

Hymn : " The story of the cross," No.
106 (*selected verses*).

Scripture : S. Luke 23 : 24-31.

Sixth Step.

Silence and prayers.

Hymn : " When I survey the wondrous
cross," No. 101. .

Scripture : S. Mark 15 : 22-38.

Seventh Step.

Silence and prayers. (*Tolling of bell.*)

Hymn : " Abide with Me," No. 12.

Benediction.

Nunc Dimittis.

Time will permit of occasional solos
during the silences and prayers, and if a

sympathetic voice is used they are very effective. The author would suggest after the reading of the Second Step the hymn, "In the hour of trial," first and second verses. After the Sixth Step, "There is a green hill far away," by Gounod.

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